



Speed Reading Isaiah (My Remedy for Terror)

Some forty years ago (shortly after I'd given my life to Jesus and was still wet behind the ears in bible knowledge) a well-meaning doctor scared me stiff.

The procedure the doctor scheduled wasn't dangerous, but the anesthesia he chose freaked me out. He called it "conscious sedation" and happily told me, *You'll just feel like you're a little kid again.* Again? The first time was bad enough. Childhood wasn't very good at my house. I was terrified.

Terrified people (like me) grab at anything they can lay their hands on that might calm them. I grabbed at Isaiah.

Speed Reading Isaiah

I started speed reading Isaiah – all 66 chapters. Every now and then a phrase would jump off the page and I'd stop to write it down, but mostly I raced through the pages and ignored all the parts I didn't understand. (My goal was solace, not insight.) I carried my completed Isaiah list with me and memorized it. Each time my fear surfaced I'd repeat to myself what I'd memorized. The sequence seemed endless: fear...remember God's words...calm...fear...remember God's words...calm. Again and again. But it truly helped. God's words did comfort me and did get me through.

| **The Word of God is the Comforter.** |

You may be wondering what I found. Here's what leapt from Isaiah's pages and calmed my heart:

You are mine. (43:1)

You are precious in my sight. (43:3)

You are honored and I love you. (43:12)

Do not fear for I am with you. (41:10)

Delight in the nearness of God.(58:2)

For I will hold you by the hand and watch over you. (42:6)

In quietness and trust is your strength. (30:15)

Non-Study Bible Study

There's a place for reading and re-reading biblical passages slowly, for discovering biblical themes, doing word studies, finding literary patterns, and diligent study of the text, but not all bible study is "study." Sometimes, as in my frantic speed reading of Isaiah, the Spirit knows exactly what we need and pierces us suddenly with His comforting truth.

You would have thought that after forty years I would have forgotten these long-ago-memorized verses, but no. They've stayed as fresh as when I first found them. They still roll easily off my tongue. Sometimes they comfort me; sometimes I use them to comfort others.

What do I want you to glean from this speed reading story? Two things. First, memorization is crucial. Do it even if you're not very good at it and it takes a lot of time – it's well worth the effort. What we memorize never leaves us – it's available in the middle of the night, during difficult encounters, when we're sideswiped by spiritual liars, and when our feelings go askew.

Second, the Spirit helps us in times of need, not just when we're doing "real" bible study. Our comforter feeds us God's words in creative and powerful ways. I'm thankful.

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